Harassment of farmers in Orissa

222. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that farmers in Orissa have been facing hardship as a result of closure of rice mills and freeze on paddy procurement by millers;

(b) whether thousands of quintals of paddy are lying without takers as millers are facing harassment at the hands of the officials;

(c) whether this is perennially faced by the farmers; and

(d) if so, the details of the help rendered by the Centre to help beleaguered farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) to (c) No reports of distress sale of paddy conforming to FAQ specifications have been received by this Department from Orissa during the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03. As on 14.2.2003, a quantity of 2.45 lakh MT of levy rice has been procured by the FCI in the State.

(d) The FCI has opened 20 paddy purchase centres in 6 Revenue Districts of Orissa during the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03 to extend the benefits of Minimum Support Price to farmers. The'centres have been opened in consultation with the State Government and keeping in view locations from where reports of distress sale were received in the past. The FCI has given adequate publicity through the press release in local Oriya Newspapers and also through distribution of leaflets in the local language to educate the farmers about the arrangements made for the procurement of paddy under the MSP operations.